

**MANSFIELD DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Thursday, October 2, 2014
Mansfield Town Hall
Town Council Chambers**

4:00 PM

MINUTES

Present: Steve Bacon, Harry Birkenruth, Mona Friedland, Brid Grant, Matt Hart, Dennis Heffley, George Jones, Philip Lodewick, Paul McCarthy, Betsy Paterson, Shamim Patwa, Steve Rogers, Paul Shapiro, and Bill Simpson

Staff: Cynthia van Zelm, John Zaccaro (Partnership attorney)

Guests: Kimberley Parsons-Whitaker, Associate Director; and Susan Westa, Community Engagement Director, both of the CT Main Street Center

1. Call to Order

Steve Bacon called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm. He asked if Agenda Items 4 and 5 could be switched so that the presentation from the CT Main Street Center could occur prior to the Executive Director report. The Board agreed to this change.

2. Opportunity for Public to Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Approval of Minutes of September 4, 2014

Mr. Lodewick arrived. Betsy Paterson made a motion to approve the minutes of September 4, 2014. Bill Simpson seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

4. Partnership Transition Discussion – Presentation from CT Main Street Center

Cynthia van Zelm introduced Kimberley Parsons-Whitaker and Susan Westa from the CT Main Street Center as follow-up from the last Board meeting. At the September Board meeting, the Board suggested an update from the CT Main Street Center on what is needed for effective downtown management and examples of the structure of other downtown organization boards.

Ms. Parsons-Whitaker and Ms. Westa introduced a Power Point presentation.

In addition to what Ms. van Zelm mentioned in her introduction, Ms. Parsons-Whitaker said they will also review the value of a managed downtown; the roles of staff, partners, and volunteers; and suggested next steps for the Partnership.

Ms. Parsons-Whitaker said the Partnership has been essentially using the National Main Street Center's 4-point approach – Restoring civic value, physical value, social value, and economic value to downtowns. The National Trust for Historic Preservation developed the national program when they were trying to bring downtowns back to life. The structure of a Main Street is typically built around a non-profit board of directors and committee structure.

She said the Partnership committee structure is set up to ensure Mansfield continues to have a beautiful downtown, pays attention to the needs of the businesses, informs people about the events to enliven the public spaces, and continues to respond to the concerns and needs of the community.

Ms. Parsons-Whitaker said there are five nationally accredited Main Street Programs that are professionally managed in Connecticut (New London, Waterbury, Simsbury, Upper Albany in Hartford, Westville in New Haven). She shared the composition for the boards for Simsbury, Waterbury, and Upper Albany. Both Waterbury and Upper Albany have universities in their districts. Both Simsbury and Upper Albany include property owners on their boards.

Ms. Paterson asked if the municipalities serve on the boards and contribute funding to the downtown organizations. Ms. Parsons-Whitaker said the three municipalities all were involved in setting up the organizations but only Simsbury and Waterbury now have a city representative. She said that all accredited programs require funding from the municipality.

Mr. Lodewick asked what the recommended ratio of funding is for a downtown organization. Ms. Parsons-Whitaker said it is typically one-third public; one-third private (could be university); and one-third from the program itself, i.e., grants, private membership, events. She said that Waterbury events garner \$106,000 a year in revenue.

Ms. Parsons-Whitaker also showed some slides of Westville Village in New Haven, Waterbury and Simsbury with respect to their action plans and downtown management activities. Ms. Parsons-Whitaker said at its core, a downtown needs to focus on "clean, safe, and friendly," but that other activities will flow from that goal.

As an example, the Simsbury Main Street Partnership developed a brochure promoting the town's school system which they shared with realtors in the community. Main Street Waterbury focuses on providing resources to its business owners (business resource directory, business improvement workshops). They focus on specific events for target audiences.

Susan Westa disclosed that she is a town resident and an alternate on the Mansfield Planning and Zoning Commission.

Ms. Westa said that much like a shopping mall, downtowns need management. Once construction is complete on Storrs Center, it will be important to maintain and enhance the downtown. She also said that sharing the economic impact of the downtown is key to ensuring continued economic support.

Ms. Westa then presented a potential model for the Partnership moving forward with incremental steps. The model would include the Partnership as the umbrella organization with two possible roles – downtown management, and development. The downtown management entity may have its own manager and/or events/volunteer coordinator with part-time ambassadors. A development entity could oversee planning and design of the downtown, and coordinate development of other areas of town.

Ms. Westa said that the CT Main Street Center is also recommending that a smaller group visit with Partnership counterparts in New Haven – the City, the Yale Office of State and New Haven Affairs, and the Town Green District. She noted the similarities with a downtown and a major university. The Town Green District is a Special Services District which is a method of financing the downtown.

Mr. Lodewick asked how many paid positions would be entailed with the scenario presented by the CT Main Street Center. Ms. Parsons-Whitaker said there would be the possibility of a CEO for the entire organization, one and a half to two people in the downtown management role, and one person as the director of development. She said ambassadors are usually contracted. Mr. Lodewick asked how this would be funded. Ms. Parsons-Whitaker suggested that a Special Services District structure with property owners contributing to the operations and management of the downtown could be one alternative.

Steve Rogers said he would be interested in seeing how the five programs in Connecticut are funded. Ms. Parsons-Whitaker said Simsbury's budget of \$200,000 is on the lower end but includes contributions from the Town, events, merchants, personal giving, corporate contributions. Upper Albany's budget is approximately \$550,000 but that includes overseeing streetscape work that CDOT is conducting on Route 44. The City contributes approximately \$200,000. Ms. Parsons-Whitaker said she would provide a more detailed budget including a salary survey that was performed.

Mr. Rogers asked if the board make-up for the other downtowns is designated in their bylaws. Ms. Parsons-Whitaker replied in the negative and said she would not recommend it. She said a good governance committee can ensure that representation of one entity is not too heavy, in response to a question from Shamim Patwa. Ms. Parsons-Whitaker advocated term limits to ensure healthy turnover.

Matt Hart said he and Ms. van Zelm have met with Town staff about operations including pursuing the idea of downtown ambassadors that might help with staffing the Transportation Center, checking for trash on the streets, etc.

He said the Town is developing an economic development strategy out of the Mansfield Tomorrow process but it would require additional staffing to implement the strategy.

Board members discussed the idea of leveraging the Partnership to help in other areas of Town while also maintaining the downtown. They agreed that more discussion would be needed on a model that would work best. Funding will be an issue.

Ms. van Zelm suggested that the concepts discussed today be brought back to the Finance and Administration Committee for its continued review.

5. Four Corners Sewer and Water Advisory Committee Update

Mr. Hart said the Town Council voted to schedule a bond referendum on the Four Corners area sewer project at the November election.

He said the plan for water service should be completed by July 2016.

Harry Birkenruth asked if taxes can be projected due to additional water service in Town. Mr. Hart said a conservative estimate is net taxes of \$500,000 at the ten year mark of the service.

6. Executive Director Report

Ms. van Zelm said LeylandAlliance is sponsoring the National Town Builders Association meeting in Mansfield from October 24 until October 26. Mr. Callahan, Mr. Hart, and Ms. van Zelm will be part of one of the panels to discuss Storrs Center.

Ms. van Zelm said the UConn student class ATION is working with the Partnership on a survey to help brand Downtown Storrs.

She said that The Hair Cuttery and Wingstop have signed leases in the corner building near Price Chopper. One space is still available. She said CVS opened on Sunday and Bruegger's Bagels/Jamba Juice should open in October.

7. Report from Committees

Advertising and Promotion

In Chair Toni Moran's absence, Ms. van Zelm said the pup crawl is scheduled for October 18 and will involve a one and a half mile dog walk from the Town Square to Moss Sanctuary.

She said trick or treating is scheduled for October 25 from 4 pm to 5 pm.

Square Fair

The last Square Fair was held and a debrief will be held with the Committee on October 9.

Celebrate Mansfield Festival

Ms. Paterson said she received very positive feedback on the Festival.

She said it was great to see all ages enjoying the day.

She said a debrief will be held in October.

Business Development and Retention

Mr. Rogers said the Committee will meet on October 9.

Finance and Administration

There was no report as the Committee did not meet last month.

Membership Development

George Jones said the Committee will meet in October.

Planning and Design

Mr. Bacon said the Committee will meet in November to go over the preliminary Sustainability Guidelines checklist with Centerplan (Phase 2) and Educational Playcare.

8. Adjourn

Ms. Paterson made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. The motion was approved and the meeting adjourned at 5:35 pm.

Minutes taken by Cynthia van Zelm.